

A VISION FOR SOUTH DOWNTOWN

...building a foundation for South Downtown neighborhoods

- Enlivening neighborhood centers
- Safeguarding historic resources
- Providing options for housing
- Creating economic opportunities
- Celebrating the area's multicultural character
- Enhancing public spaces
- Sustaining the environment



The Livable South Downtown Planning Study was initiated by Mayor Greg Nickels in 2005 to study potential land use and zoning changes that will encourage investment in South Downtown neighborhoods.

South Downtown is a richly complex geographic area, home to Seattle's first neighborhoods, the region's hub for transit, diverse cultural communities, regional entertainment venues... located between the city's commercial core and major industrial center.

South Downtown neighborhoods include:

- Pioneer Square;
- Chinatown/ International District;
- Little Saigon and areas east of Interstate 5 within the Downtown Urban Center;
- The stadium district; and
- Areas at the far north of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center.

WHY HERE? WHY NOW?

South Downtown is located at the crossroads of the region's transportation system, largely within the Downtown Urban Center. Encouraging new jobs and housing near transit and other services is an important strategy to reduce traffic congestion and encourage sustainable patterns of community growth in the region.

Over the past decade, as growth and investment has occurred throughout Seattle, South Downtown has not experienced desired new investment in housing and jobs, resulting in an often challenging social environment, deteriorating structures, and vacant or under-used land.

A key question for South Downtown neighborhoods is: How can the City encourage more investment, residents and workers to enliven South Downtown, while retaining the history and character of South Downtown neighborhoods?

The South Downtown Planning Study builds upon the vision established by neighborhood plans, Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, and City policies governing historic preservation. The Study provided an opportunity for additional community dialogue and information that strongly informed the Livable South Downtown land use recommendations. The study included:

- Extensive public process and dialogue with neighborhood groups and many others;
- Assessment of economic conditions including those affecting small businesses;
- Study of urban design needs, identifying future opportunities;

- An Environmental Impact Statement that evaluated alternatives for future growth;
- Examination of transportation patterns and investments; and
- Study of urban form in the neighborhoods

BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SOUTH DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS: DIRECTIONS FOR LAND USE

Land use regulations provide an important foundation for future growth and development. South Downtown Planning Study recommendations address the following objectives:

South Downtown will develop in a manner that is sustainable for the community and for the environment.

Proposed zoning will support increased residents and jobs near light rail stations and other transit hubs. Zoning will offer incentives for improvements to the public realm in order to encourage people to live near places of employment, seek services locally, and use public transit whenever possible. New development will serve environmental goals through the introduction of green roofs, landscaping and open spaces, green streets and sustainable energy systems.

- Transfer of development rights (TDR) and incentives will encourage new open space;



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- LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver will be required for all buildings taking advantage of bonus development options; and
- Landscaping will be required to improve water quality, reduce stormwater flows, and improve habitat.

A diversity of households are located within and near core neighborhood centers.

South Downtown's population will increase in new and rehabilitated mixed use buildings in and near core neighborhood areas of Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District, and Little Saigon. Additional residents will bring personal investment to neighborhoods, and will enhance public safety by providing more “eyes” on the street. Zoning changes to increase development heights and allowable densities for residential use are tailored to neighborhood areas.

- **Chinatown/International District and Pioneer Square.** Incentives will promote residential uses in renovated historic buildings and infill development between and around historic buildings;
- **Japantown.** Opportunities will exist for highrise residential towers with ground-floor retail;
- **Little Saigon.** Allowance for residential uses in midrise structures will contribute to a mixed-use environment;
- **South Chinatown.** Increases in height for residential uses will spur new investment south of the Historic Chinatown core within the International Special Review District; and
- **Affordable housing.** Inclusion of incentive zoning programs will support affordable workforce housing.

South Downtown is a place to locate new jobs.

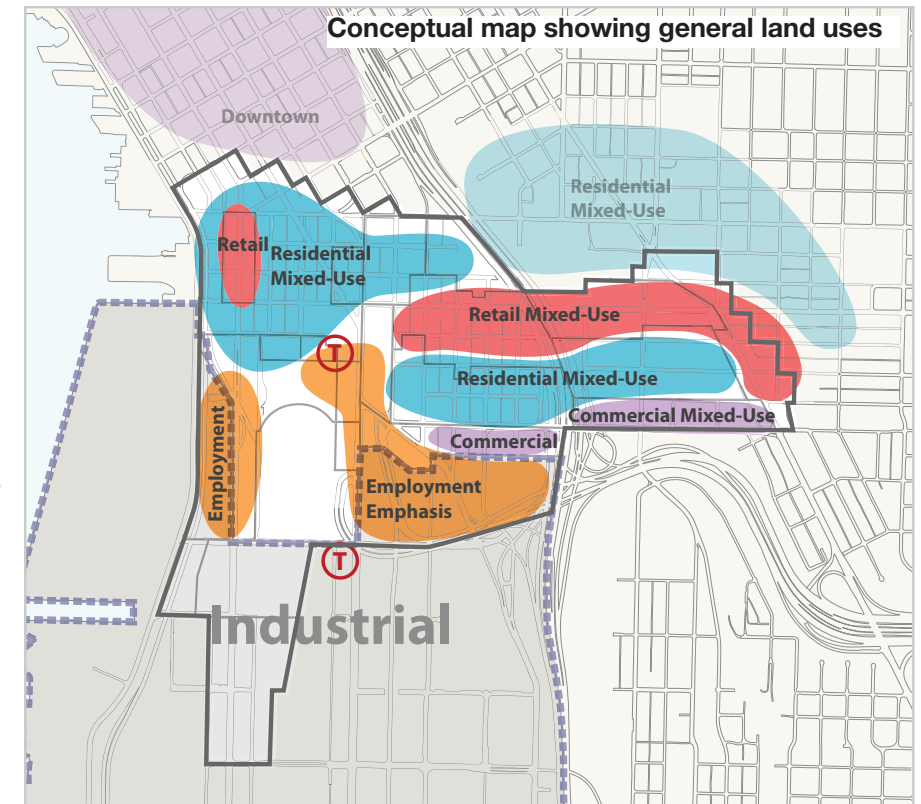
Proposed zoning in South Downtown allows for a mix of uses, with varying degrees of density for residential and non-residential uses. Proposed zoning emphasizes office uses at the edge of core neighborhood areas, allowing a transition from the Downtown Urban Center to the north, to industrial areas to the south. Future office developments will include pedestrian and open space amenities. Most new office development will be located within walking distance of light rail stations and other transit options. Commuter parking will be discouraged.

Areas where zoning would allow significant employment density include:

- Land south of S. Charles Street area near the Stadium light rail station;
- Areas along 1st Avenue South on the site of WOSCA warehouse;
- The north lot (Qwest Field) adjacent to King Street Station; and
- Infill development throughout South Downtown.

The historic, cultural, and small business character of South Downtown neighborhoods is protected and enhanced.

The strength of South Downtown neighborhoods is their historic and cultural characteristics. Consistent with neighborhood plans, land use recommendations propose modest increases in allowable heights and densities to bring investment and vitality to core neighborhood areas through new residents, street-level retail and upper floors of buildings that are actively used. At the same time, proposed zoning serves to prevent adverse impacts of development on surrounding historic properties. The height of historic buildings is generally limited to the historic height of structures. Retaining existing heights while introducing new programs to encourage rehabili-



tation will discourage demolition of historic structures in the two National Register Historic Districts of Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District.

- The role of the Special Review Boards will be retained.
- An appropriate scale of new infill development around historic buildings is encouraged.
- South Downtown Historic Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) will be introduced in South Downtown to encourage preservation and provide resources to assist the rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- Small business character of the existing Little Saigon neighborhood commercial area will be retained through limits on the size of business uses, pedestrian design standards and incentives for residential development on upper floors of buildings.

South Downtown's streetscapes and public spaces are safer and more accessible.

In areas where allowable residential densities will increase, green streets are proposed. Implementation of green streets will be in conjunction with future development projects as part of the incentive zoning program and as part of streetscape improvements required by the Land Use Code. Outside core neighborhood areas, large development projects will be required to make improvements to the public realm consistent with the size and impact of future developments. Projects that use bonus development rights will have many options to create open spaces through neighborhood open space amenities, and the creation of green streets.

Freight and other vehicles continue to move through and around South Downtown.

In general, recommended zoning changes discourage future development activities that will conflict with freight and active industrial uses. No changes to zoning are proposed for the industrial area south of South Royal Brougham Way. Significant increases in zoned density and changes of use are located away from active freight corridors. Where a potential for future pedestrian activity exists, recommendations call for future street designs that focus pedestrian activity to specific locations in order to minimize conflicts between modes of travel.

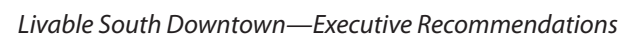
Economic opportunities are enhanced and protected.

Over the past decade, the City has undertaken several measures to respond to the needs of businesses in Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District, and Little Saigon.

Most recently, the City evaluated the local economy: 1) to understand real-estate economic conditions throughout South Downtown, and 2) to understand the needs of small businesses in Chinatown/International District/Little Saigon. Land use recommendations include densities and development standards that provide opportunities for future development, particularly in areas where large sites, superior access to transit and potential views exist. However, these opportunities are balanced by proposed incentive zoning provisions that will direct resources to affordable housing and provide public amenities. Land use recommendations are intended to help preserve small business opportunities, affordable housing and historic resources located in core neighborhood areas.



The pages that follow provide sub-area descriptions of land use recommendations. The map to the right illustrates recommended zone designations and proposed height limits. A map of existing zones can be found in the Appendices, on page 104, of this report. Several terms and land use concepts are referenced throughout this document. They are described on the following pages.



What Do The Abbreviations Mean?

The following chart identifies the zones that are proposed for South Downtown as identified on the map on the preceding page. Each zone proposed for South Downtown includes provisions that support a pedestrian-oriented street-level environment. A more complete description of each zone can be found in Chapter 23.34 of the Land Use Code.

Zone	Zone Designation	Description
PSM	Pioneer Square Mixed	The PSM zone applies to areas within the Pioneer Square Preservation District, characterized by a mix of uses in low and medium scale structures.
IDM	International District Mixed	The IDM zone applies to areas within the International Special Review District (ISRD), characterized by a mix of uses in low and medium scale structures.
IDR	International District Residential	The IDR zone applies to primarily residential areas in the northern portion of the ISRD.
DMR	Downtown Mixed Residential	The DMR zone applies to mixed use areas within the Downtown Urban Center where housing and associated services and amenities predominate at low to moderate densities.
DMC	Downtown Mixed Commercial	The DMC zone characterizes areas with lower scale office, retail and commercial uses mixed with housing at the edges of the retail and office cores in the Downtown Urban Center.
IC	Industrial-Commercial	The IC zone is intended to promote development of businesses which incorporate a mix of industrial, commercial and other employment activities near downtown.
NC2	Neighborhood Commercial 2	The NC2 zone is applied to moderately-sized shopping areas that provide a range of retail sales and services to the surrounding neighborhood.

Zoning Terms & Concepts

Several concepts are referenced throughout this report as described below. A more complete glossary of terms can be found in the appendices of this report.

Term	What Does it Mean?
Density	Density generally refers to the intensity of land uses. The Land Use Code regulates the density of both residential and non-residential land uses through limits on floor area, restrictions on heights for certain uses, allowances/ prohibition of uses in certain areas, etc.
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the relationship between the amount of gross floor area permitted in a structure and the area of the lot on which the structure is located as depicted in Exhibit 23.84.012 A from the Seattle Land Use Code. For example, a FAR of 2 would permit a building with gross floor area equal to 2 times the area of the lot. See Appendix C glossary on page 106 for a graphic depiction of FAR.
“Base” or Base Development Right	“Base” development rights are the heights and densities to which future development projects can be constructed without participating in the incentive zoning program. In South Downtown, these are roughly equivalent to development rights existing under zoning today prior to rezone.
Maximum Development Right	Developers will have the option to develop to “maximum” height and density limits through participation in the incentive zoning program. In some cases, other conditions are required of development projects that exceed “base” development rights. These are consistent with the scale and impacts of future development projects.
Incentive Zoning Program	The incentive zoning program is described on page 80. Developers who participate in the program may develop to greater height and density by including affordable housing or other public amenities, or making a payment-in-lieu.
South Downtown	“South Downtown” is proposed to be defined in the Seattle Land Use Code. This definition includes all areas of the Livable South Downtown planning area located within the Downtown Urban Center. Other areas of the South Downtown planning area are outside of the Downtown Urban Center, and are not included in the definition of “South Downtown” as regulated by the Land Use Code.
Use of “/” in a Zone Designation	The number before the “/” refers to non-residential heights. Numbers after the “/” refers to residential heights. In case where no “/” is used, the numbers express height ranges for all uses.
Use of “-” in a Zone Designation	The first number in a sequence refers to a zone’s “base” height. For example “PSM 100’-130’” suggests a base height of 100’ for all uses. The 130’ refers to the maximum allowable height.